

FALL PREVIEW '09

On Your Shopping List: Traceability

A handful of new grocery stores and services make transparency in sourcing their specialty.

By [Robin Raisfeld](#) & [Rob Patronite](#) Published Aug 23, 2009

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Basis bounty from J. Glebocki Farms.

(Photo: Hannah Whitaker)

Over time, various words and phrases have entered the lexicon of conscious consumption: *biodynamic*, *organic*, *natural*, *sustainable*. And of course, the ever-popular and frequently exaggerated *local and seasonal*. The watchword this fall, as evidenced by a new crop of food shops and specialized purveyors, is “traceability,” as in the transparency of a food’s journey from farm (or factory) to fork. On a global scale, high-tech corporations invest millions in tracing protocols, mostly to stanch food-safety scares and eliminate fraud. But locally, and much more appetizingly, a handful of new retailers are launching shops and services that make it easier to know exactly what you’re eating, where it comes from, and, in many cases, the life stories of the folks who grow it.

1. Dickson’s Farmstand Meats

Jake Dickson, direct marketer turned boutique butcher, started out selling local meats at farmer’s markets, but next month, he unveils his Chelsea Market shop, where each cut will be labeled with not only the farm the animal came from but the breed and production method. This information doesn’t come easily at the supermarket or dinner table. Nor does supply-chain mileage (the distance an animal travels from farm to slaughterhouse to shop). Dickson’s cutoff is 400 miles, but most of his meat, including dry-aged grass- and grain-finished beef, is raised much closer. Because he buys whole animals and rotates his stock, the conscientious carnivore will have to make certain concessions: buying the whole chicken instead of single parts, for instance, and acclimating to less familiar cuts like flatiron and beef shin. For advice in that department, they can turn to resident chef Gabriel Ross, who’ll be making sausages and pâtés on-site. For Dickson, traceability means more than the code stamped on every label. “It’s building that relationship and trust.”

75 Ninth Ave., at 16th St. September; dicksonsfarmstand.com.

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2. Litchfield Farms Organic & Natural CSF

Based on the CSA (community-supported agriculture) model, community-supported fisheries connect individual fishermen to consumers, cutting out the middleman to ensure a better price for the former and a continuous supply of fresh local seafood for the latter. Andrea Angera Jr., takes a modified approach in the program he's spearheaded for his seafood-distribution company, Connecticut-based Litchfield Farms: He pays participating fishermen from Connecticut and Rhode Island a fixed per-pound price for their whole catch, roughly twice what they'd make at auction, then sells directly to subscribers in weekly ten-pound increments. And here's the ecofriendly twist: By requiring compliance on fishing methods (hook and line only) and by specifying species (currently porgy, black bass, and mahimahi), Angera is able to curtail environmentally destructive techniques like trawling and encourage sustainable fishing. Manhattan deliveries are made Tuesdays and Fridays, and whole-fish per-pound pricing ranges from \$4.75 to \$6.75.

To enroll, call 860-483-7040, or write to info@litchfieldfarms.net.

3. The Meat Hook

Perhaps the prototypical new-wave butcher, Tom Mylan made meat both cool and politically correct at his butchering classes, on his blog, and most recently behind the counter at Marlow & Daughters. Next up: a new Williamsburg shop (its location, in the vicinity of Lorimer and Metropolitan, yet to be announced) with the noble mission of making local, sustainable high-quality meats accessible to all, namely in the populist forms of sausage, hot dogs, and hamburgers. There will also be family packs and "cow shares."

Late October.

4. Basis Markets

The brainchild of former management consultant Bion Bartning, Basis is a newly formed company that recently acquired (and greatly expanded) Farm to Chef, a wholesale distributor connecting small local farms to haute New York kitchens. Late this fall, Bartning plans to open the first Basis Market, a 2,000-square-foot prototype grocery stocking the same farm-fresh produce, locally raised meats, and farmstead dairy that Basis supplies to places like Gramercy Tavern, Bklyn Larder, and Mas, as well as hot and cold prepared foods made from those stellar ingredients. "No Twinkies, no toilet paper," says Bartning, who describes his wares as "traditional, localized, and 100 percent traceable"—and, since he's taking a lower-than-average profit margin, affordable. In fact, although his first shop will occupy the former premises of a law office on the fringes of the meatpacking district, Bartning believes the concept will work everywhere from Princeton, New Jersey, to Bed-Stuy. "Traceability means provenance," says Bartning. "I think it is the future."

324 W. 14th St., nr. Eighth Ave. Late fall.



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